



Dear Iowans:

The 1998 Iowa legislative session created a revolutionary initiative. It was founded on the vision that communities and state government could work together to improve the well being of young children and their families. The challenge of implementing the vision was enormous. Success meant changing the culture within state government and meshing the change with dozens of local cultures. It would be premature to say that this challenge has been successfully met, but progress toward a shared vision, common goals, and working together has been made.

*Revolutionary
initiative*

At the heart of Community Empowerment are 58 local Community Empowerment Areas representing all 99 counties. Each has its own leadership and locally developed plan. The level of integration and collaboration among local community partners committed to young children has grown substantially.

Collaboration is the key to success

In January 2000 the Iowa Empowerment Board (IEB), adopted statewide indicators of performance for each of the five desired results for Community Empowerment: Healthy Children; Children Ready to Succeed in School; Safe and Supportive Communities; Secure and Nurturing Families; and Secure and Nurturing Child Care Environments. Four years of data for these indicators can be found on the Empowerment web site and in this report. This year's annual report highlights the progress that has been made in using data to track success and guide local decision making.

*Every child, beginning at
birth, will be healthy and
successful.*

*Community Empowerment awarded
national technical assistance grant.*

During 2002 the Iowa Empowerment Board received a technical assistance grant from North Carolina's Smart Start National Technical Assistance Center. Through the grant assistance, Community Empowerment is leading efforts to build a statewide comprehensive early care, health and education system. Work on a planning framework built on results, goals, indicators, strategies and performance measures will continue in 2003. The vision for the early childhood system is "Every child, beginning at birth, will be healthy and successful."

Pulling together many elements into a successful plan seemed impossible in the beginning. Each year progress is made toward collaboration, achieving statewide results, and increased advocacy for early childhood. Across the state, Community Empowerment Areas are successfully moving forward in their efforts to create positive change for children and families. We could easily give 58 different stories of success from each of the areas. We have included just a few good examples in the Achieving Results section and a Showcase Report from each area in the final section of this report.

*Progress continues
to be made.*

It is a testament to how much Iowans care for young children and their families as they put aside individual interests and work together to help make Iowa a better place to raise a child.

Thanks to everyone that has contributed to this worthy effort.

**Nancy Van Milligen, Chairperson
Iowa Empowerment Board**